

Subject: [Fwd: [Fwd: Project ID 13681]]
From: Jeff Ottesen <jeff_ottesen@dot.state.ak.us>
Date: Sat, 31 Dec 2005 11:04:26 -0900
To: Susan K Woodrow <susan_woodrow@dot.state.ak.us>

193

----- Original Message -----
Subject: [Fwd: Project ID 13681]
Date: Sat, 31 Dec 2005 10:56:31 -0900
From: Andy Hughes <andy_hughes@dot.state.ak.us>
To: Jeffery C Ottesen <jeff_ottesen@dot.state.ak.us>

STIP Comments

Subject: Project ID 13681
From: Theresa Savland <lattecpa@aptalaska.net>
Date: Sat, 31 Dec 2005 10:05:29 -0900
To: andy_hughes@dot.state.ak.us, DOT_STIP@dot.state.ak.us

I am writing in support of the Port St. Nicholas Road Improvements, Project ID 13681. Please use the attached word document and photo files as my submission. This will arrive to you in four e-mails because the photo files are large.

Thank you for your consideration.
Theresa Savland
PO Box 217
Craig, AK 99921

Jeff Ottesen <jeff_ottesen@dot.state.ak.us>
Director
Alaska Dept. of Transportation
Division of Program Development

Project ID 13681.eml	Content-Type: message/rfc822 Content-Encoding: 7bit
-----------------------------	--

Savland13681-1.zip	Content-Type: application/x-zip-compressed Content-Encoding: base64
---------------------------	--

STIP06-08.doc	Content-Type: application/msword
----------------------	---

Theresa Savland
PO Box 217
Craig, AK 99921

December 30, 2005

Andy Hughes
Alaska DOT&PF
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, AK 99801
Via e-mail: andy_hughes@dot.state.ak.us

Re: 2006-2008 Draft STIP
Need ID#13681, Port Saint Nicholas Road BST

I am writing this letter in support of the Port St. Nicholas Road Upgrade, Project 13681. The Draft STIP shows that the funding for this project has been moved back to FY09.

In December 2001 I wrote a letter to you regarding this project. At that point, I was disappointed because the project had been moved to FY04. It seems ironic that the FY04 time period has come and gone and still no progress on the project.

Supporting Comments and Background

Approximately 350 PFD recipients live out the Port St. Nicholas Road. I am told this number does not include summer residents, which could increase this number to 500 or more. The school district provides daily bus service for elementary through high school. All residents must travel this road to and from work in Craig or other towns on the Island. In fact, all residents must travel to Craig or beyond to conduct any kind of business: post office, doctor's appointment, grocery shopping, ferry travel, etc. The City of Craig water treatment plant is located at 5.5 mile; City maintenance staff travels this road every day to ensure the city has sanitary water. My letter of 2001 indicates that statistics showed daily traffic to be 1,000 vehicles. In the five years since, the traffic has undoubtedly increased and the road continues to deteriorate.

No road improvements have been made since I moved to the Island in 1998. No topping has been added; the ditches have completely filled with dirt and weeds; culverts are plugged. The road was in poor condition then, but at this point the road would have to be classified as dangerous. The only saving grace is that the potholes are so big and plentiful right now that you can't really drive over 25mph. But people do, and someone is likely to get hurt as the winter months progress. With the heavy rains of late November, a section of the road washed down to bare boulders. In heavy rains, water cuts away the drivable surface because it is often lower than the "ditch;" the road is narrower each year. In the winter the road often turns into a sheet of ice because the drainage is non-existent; I have stepped out of my car and not been able to stand up without holding on to the door. The road slopes so steeply in some areas that you have

to drive down the center just to keep from sliding off the road. Meeting an oncoming car is the most terrifying experience in bad conditions.

As a direct result of the lack of topping material and regular maintenance, vehicles must drive the road without regard to conventional traffic control methods. I call it "combat driving." I essentially drive focusing on avoiding potholes, large rocks, and "dips" in the road, all while trying to be mindful of pedestrians and their dogs who must take shelter in the salmon berry bushes to allow enough room for cars to pass. There is no shoulder to the road at all, which creates a hazard for pedestrians and disabled vehicles. A flat tire is a regular occurrence for anyone who drives the road on a regular basis.

Project Scoring Criteria

The following addresses the issues specific to each scoring area. All categories are justifiably more than a zero; and most are justifiably a 5. Improvements to this road provide increased access to recreation, medical facilities, intermodal transportation, schools, and economic centers. Property values stand to benefit from road improvements. Craig stands to benefit from increased property development if the area becomes more accessible.

1. Economic Benefits (5): Available land in Craig city limits is limited. The Port St. Nicholas area is adjacent to Craig and has become a popular area for new homes. Several houses built in the area are large vacation homes. Road improvements will undoubtedly increase the value of housing in the area; additional development possibilities will benefit the economics of Craig. I don't see that any road built in the state has true economic benefits to the state itself.
2. Health & quality of life (3): Emergency services from the City of Craig are severely hampered because travel along the road is so difficult and slow. Elderly people have moved from the area because the driving is so hard on them. Emergency response time is dangerously low.
3. Safety (5): There is no shoulder available for pedestrians or disabled vehicles (conflict between motorized and non-motorized use). Several accidents requiring med-evac have occurred over the years; no deaths that I'm aware (accident pattern). First-hand knowledge of the road indicates a high accident potential or risk. This road is dangerous!
4. Improves intermodal transportation (3): All residents must travel this road to a ferry or plane terminal. Improved road conditions would reduce driving hazards as people are traveling to and from other transportation facilities.
5. Agency contribution (5): For several years, the BIA has had \$3 million in funding available for the project. The state is supposed to match that funding. In good faith, the BIA allowed preliminary engineering to commence. Several officials have said that the state "promised" that this funding would be available in the current fiscal year.

We have been led to believe that there was a change to the BIA funding formula that significantly decreases the funding for Craig. Under a special agreement, the original BIA funding was extended because the state funding was to be available in FY06. There appears to be a serious risk to the BIA funding if the state match funding is delayed.
- 6a. Local agency contribution (3): The City of Craig has agreed to assume maintenance responsibility for this road.

7. Public Support (5): Eight comments are listed on the website. This comment will make 9. That is 2.5% of full-time residents (which includes children). Non-residents are most likely unaware of the STIP comment period. That appears to be a fairly high rate per capita compared to other projects. The City of Craig has the Port St. Nicholas Road project included in its transportation priorities and Overall Economic Development Plan.
8. Environmental approval (5): The BIA is in the process of completing the environmental study. The plan is awaiting approval.
9. New or improved access (2): Unfortunately this rating does not indicate the level of improved access. The access is improved to ALL uses, whether that access is from the Port St. Nicholas area to Craig or from Craig to fishing creeks and beaches. In essence, it would provide NEW access to all who avoid exploring the area because their vehicles are unequipped to handle the conditions.
10. System preservation (5): The primary purpose of this project is to extend the life of the road and access to the area.
11. Joint project with BIA (5): The BIA funding has been awaiting state match for at least three years.
12. Other factors (5): This area is in the unorganized borough, outside of the Craig city limits. The residents of this area are reliant upon state and federal funding for this project.

Narrative for Accompanying Photos

On December 14, 2005, I took twenty photos of the road conditions between 3 mile and 5 mile. The City of Craig had begun grading the road, so the first three miles were in good condition. Some of the worst areas were in those first 3 miles and it is unfortunate I am unable to supply some photos of those areas. Ten photos accompany this letter (my regret is that I cannot somehow attach a physical jarring effect to represent the effect on a person and their vehicle). Notice in the photos that there is no safe place for a pedestrian or a disabled vehicle.

32miwidepothole – In this photo, there is one pothole that stretches from one side of the road to the other. This pothole was not visible as it was at the crest point of a hill.

33mideepoathole – This photo shows 3 large potholes spanning most of the road.

Notice the large rocks in the middle pothole. This picture was taken 50 yards from the first picture.

34mitravelpath – This photo shows a section of road with many potholes. Notice how the tire tracks show that people are moving from left to right lane in both directions in order to avoid potholes. This is a fairly straight stretch of road, but on corners and hills, this type of driving pattern presents obvious problems.

36mimultioncorner – A wide span of potholes as vehicles enter/exit a corner turn. Some traffic patterns are visible.

38mimultcornerhill – Potholes, potholes, potholes. Notice the steep slope; this one happens to slope toward a hill. In many cases, the road slopes toward a steep dropoff.

42mipotholestravel – This photo shows a stretch of road with potholes and the resulting travel patterns

42mitravelpath – A photo from nearly the same location in the other direction. The travel path is obvious.

- 45mipotholes – A section of road where potholes are unavoidable. This low spot is also susceptible to water across the road in extreme heavy rain.
- 47mislope – The slope on this hill is an example of an extreme slope toward a dropoff. In icy conditions, a driver must creep down the hill, on the wrong side of the road, in first gear.
- 49mipotholes – At the bottom of the hill, a series of large potholes. In icy conditions, potholes severely hamper traction and vehicle control as the tires spend much of the time off the ground.

I do not believe that the State is fully aware of the needs of the residents of this road, nor do I believe that the State realizes the extent of deterioration of the existing road. If the circumstances were truly known, this project would have a higher rating and would be given the funding needed to make the road safe and passable for those who use it on a daily basis.

I sincerely request that the state Department of Transportation review the merits of this project. The residents of the area are supportive and hopeful that the project will continue as we have been led to believe it will. Several people have put a lot of time and energy into securing the federal match, and it would be unfortunate if that effort went to waste. The tribal organization of Craig has secured an extension of time for the BIA funding, which will most likely not last forever. The City of Craig has represented their support and have agreed to future maintenance obligations. I believe the residents of this area deserve your consideration and the reinstatement of funding for this project as it has been promised.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about the comments I have written or to provide additional information regarding this project. I appreciate your time and attention to this project.

Sincerely,

/s/ signed in original
Theresa Savland
PO Box 217
Craig, AK 99921













